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ABSTRACT

A descriptive field study was conducted in Seoul, Korea, to assess Korean interpersonal communication. The data for the study were collected through observations of interpersonal communication patterns among students in university classes, between faculty and students as well as among various faculty members, among business people, and between the researcher and his housekeeper. The observations suggested that Koreans (1) disregard personal privacy (in a Western sense) in matters of business and personal affairs; (2) are extremely reluctant to disclose their personal motivations; (3) have exceptional regard for status and position; (4) regard human relationships and contact as especially important; (5) are incredibly generous; and (6) are so image conscious that the appearance of things is more important than their substance, such as in verbal or written commitments to do something by a certain time. Koreans also show unwillingness to take advice and are resistant to systemic change. (MKM)

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KOREAN INTERPERSONAL PATTERNS: IMPLICATIONS FOR KOREAN/AMERICAN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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KOREAN INTERPERSONAL PATTERNS: IMPLICATIONS FOR KOREAN/AMERICAN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Introduction

This field study was prompted by a four month faculty exchange to Dankook University in Seoul, Korea.[1] It was designed as a synthetic assessment of Korean interpersonal communication, and how this communication might interface with typical American interpersonal communication.

Two factors were relevant to the origin of this study; it was begun as a study of the communication barriers between Americans and Asians. Korea is not the predominant power in Asia, but in many ways is representative of Asia. China has affected Korea regularly over its 5000 year history and much of Korean culture is the result of Chinese influence. For example, Korean wisdom is Confucian in its essence; more than any other philosophy, the teachings of Confucius have affected Korean culture. Yet, the Japanese occupied Korea from

1910-45 and left an indelible imprint of Japanese culture on Korea--diet, and school system, and business procedures. Moreover, the predominant religion of Korea is Buddhism. At the same time coexisting with Confucianism and Buddhism, the predominant epistemology of Korea is Shamanism--truth and knowledge are contained in nature. Finally, all three philosophies -- Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shamanism--coexist with transplanted Christianity; Korea claims that over ten percent of its populace is Christian -- the highest percent in the Orient. Koreans see no contradiction in claiming to be Christian while at the same time professing the teachings of Confucius and Buddha and practicing ancient Korean Shamanism.

The second reason for this study was to construct a heuristic model of intercultural communication between Korea and America. With ever growing interdependence between America and Korea in business and commerce, a capsule analysis of Korean/American interpersonal communication would be extremely useful.[2] It is the intention of this study to be a starting place for a dialogue regarding the validity of the conclusions herein reached as well as the utility of this type of nonempirical assessment of human interaction among peoples and cultures.

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature on Korean/American intercultural communication revealed a substantial lack of interest in this topic. Yet, the literature is re-

plete with discussions of various facets of the Japanese culture. For example, in three of the more prominent texts used in the study of intercultural communication, Japan is given considerable attention. In Beyond Culture Hall details the language of Japanese space and honorifics as well as what it means to belong to a group in Japan (10, 49-60). Prosser devotes at least one quarter of The Cultural Dialogue to an analysis of Japanese culture (15); in a special chapter prepared for Prosser's text, Yoshikawa contrasts Japanese and American cultural characteristics (19, 220-230). Samovar and Porter include four separate articles on Japanese communication in their popular edition of Intercultural Communication: A Reader (16). Morsbach outlines various aspects of nonverbal communication in Japan (13, 240-259), Van Zandt talks about how to negotiate in Japan (19, 307-319), Cathcart and Cathcart analyze group process in a Japanese context (7, 58-65), and Doi relates amae to Japanese patterns of communication (9, 188-193). In all three of these widely used reference sources for intercultural communication, Korean culture is not considered as a major source of analysis.

Yet strategically and economically Korea is at least as important to the United States as Japan. In terms of its location as well as its cultural heritage, Korea is the gateway to China. Moreover, the Korean labor pool is a multi-billion dollar asset for American goods manufactured by American companies in Korea. These lower labor costs make American goods more competitive with rival Japanese goods.

A review of all relevant indices, abstracts--including ERIC--as well as Dissertation Abstracts revealed only a handful of relevant information on Korean/

American intercultural communication. The research is grouped around two polar topics: 1) Korean immigrants in the U.S.; 2) Korean intercultural education in Korea. Kim found that Korean immigrants living in Chicago were happier relating to established Americans than to other Koreans (11, 53-68). Lee concluded that Korean male immigrants have a difficult time adapting to American role behavior because "the roles of driver, cook, baby sitter and shopper were never performed by the husband in Korea" (26, 5). Park studied three generations of Korean immigrants in Los Angeles and found important linear, progressive changes in Korean value systems (28). And in two separate studies, Chang and Hufler found that communication was the main ingredient in acculturation (22,23). Finally, a Los Angeles Schools paper asserted that Korean Americans have difficulty adapting to the notion of the American nuclear family as opposed to a Korean extended family (21, 12).

International awareness is national policy in Korea. For example, during his stay in Korea, the author's host, Dankook University, was launching an extremely ambitious plan of building a satellite campus 100 miles south of Seoul. The core teaching faculty will be made up of foreign faculty from all over the world with an emphasis on the U.S. and Germany. Exchange faculty will be provided housing, transportation and a salary on two and four year contracts. Recent Ph.D. dissertations by young Korean immigrants and Korean students attending graduate school in the U.S. reflect this international outreach. Jung describes the aesthetics of intercultural value education in Korea (24). So details the impact of culture-oriented and future-oriented counselor education in Korea (30). Rho studied the influence of American organizational styles on typical Korean ministries (29), and Oh details the effect of leadership style on group interactions and performance in typical Korean industrial organizations (27).

Only one source provided direct information on Korean/American intercultural

communications. The B.Y.U. Language Research Center outlined various themes for relating with Koreans in its pamphlet series, "Building Bridges to Understanding." (25)

Clearly the information and synthesis provided in this paper is missing from the literature on intercultural communication.

METHOD

This paper is the result of a descriptive field study. Prosser notes the importance of this type of microscopic (culturally specific) yet holistic (culturally descriptive) analysis particularly in the beginning of an ethnography of communication (14, 63-64). Becker argues that one direction for future research in intercultural communication should be an attempt to identify the variables that are most important in intercultural communication between different peoples in different cultures (3, 353). Szalay says, "The primary objective of communication research is to provide capabilities and information for conducting effective communications." (18, 1). Finally Burk argues for the importance of descriptive research in intercultural communication. He says: "Adequate description of the interaction of communication and culture may assist researchers in understanding the role of these complex systems and the broad relationships among other variables. ... 'Without adequate description, we would not have models that connect with the world that man perceives and about which he theorizes.'"[9] Description of attributes is prerequisite to an accurate model or theory of relationships between systems." (5, 31) Clearly, a systematic, rigorous descriptive research methodology is necessary in the study of intercultural communication behavior.

The data for the study were collected in five separate ways. First, during the exchange the researcher and his wife taught sixteen different classes ranging from freshman English to advanced courses in the Graduate School. Every day we observed and recorded interpersonal communication patterns among students.

Moreover, the writer was privy to numerous interactions between faculty and students as well as among various faculty. These interactions were noted and recorded according to the prescribed model in a notebook.

Third, our Korean live-in housekeeper was an invaluable source of data; interaction with her was a daily occurrence. These data were regularly collected and recorded.

Data were also collected and recorded by doing business in the local economy on a day to day basis. The communication behavior of business people, shopkeepers, tailors, drivers, and laborers were observed and recorded.

Finally, second-hand data were gathered by interviewing and discussing Korean interpersonal communication habits with members of the Royal Asiatic Society and other Americans living in Korea. However, these data were not instrumental in any of the conclusions herein reached; these other visitors in Korea were interviewed in order to confirm or deny the observations recorded by the author.

The research was facilitated by the Korean habit of virtually disregarding personal privacy in a Western sense in matters of business and personal affairs. For example, apparently due to lack of personal office space, personal affairs such as family matters and affairs of business are often discussed in the presence of office visitors and mates. Thus exposure to the most delicate as well as the most mundane interpersonal and social interaction is an everyday occurrence in Korean life.

On the other hand, the research for this paper was complicated by the fact that Koreans are extremely reluctant to disclose the reasons for their communication patterns. Korea is called the "land of contrasts" and indeed the Korean habit of being totally open with foreigners concerning their personal affairs, yet being so closed about their beliefs, attitudes and values is a contradiction. It's as if the Korean does not mind sharing peripheral content like personal business with the outsider, but information or clues to what motivates or actuates

Korean behavior are treated like priviledged information.

The Model

Although the author does not speak Korean, much of the interaction observed was in English. The other interaction was observed and recorded according to the following nonverbal model:

I. Eye contact
   A. Length of time in sustained contact
   B. Direction of glance
II. Facial Expressions
   A. Smiles
   B. Frowns
   C. Furrowed brow
III. Body Movement
   A. Bows
   B. Posture during interaction
IV. Dress and appearance
   A. Type and color of clothes
   B. Similarities and differences in dress in various groups
V. Proxemics
   A. Personal space observed
   B. Seating positions in formal and informal situations
   C. Arrangement of office and home furniture
VI. Touch
   A. Type
   B. Length of time in sustained contact
VII. Extraverbal cues
   A. Vocal inflection and stress
   B. Pauses and use of silence
   C. Emphasis

Smutkupt and Barna argue for the viability of this type of nonverbal communication research in the study of intercultural communication. They assert that this type of research is of "prime importance" in generating models of intercultural communication behavior (17, 131). The verbal interaction in English as well as the nonverbal communication was synthesized according to Burke's dramatistic pentad (6) and Boulding's image model (4). These two models for analysis of human communication helped focus the researcher's attention on key communication patterns between and among Koreans.

Korean Interpersonal Communication Patterns

Reaffirmation of status and position in interpersonal interaction. Koreans have exceptional regard for status and position. An analysis of a typical interpersonal exchange between two people in an office reveals that five separate but related factors reaffirm the status of the ranking person.

At the outset of an interpersonal exchange, the depth of the bow indicates status of position in the order of things. However, after the initial bow and verbal greeting (How are you?) the encounter becomes more complex because each participant in the exchange will demur, appear to "deny self" and position. For example, in an interaction between an associate professor and a full professor in the latter's office (which is usually the way that it would occur) the full professor would offer the seat of honor to the associate. After profuse denials back and forth ("No, you," "No, you") the professor would take the honored position. In every faculty office there is a conference area usually consisting of two chairs and a couch facing each other with a coffee table in between. The chair on the right facing the couch is the chair of honor; the other chair is second in rank and the couch last. The seat on the couch across from the right chair appears to be more highly regarded because it is nearest the seat of honor.

Although Koreans are very tolerant of American "honest" behavior, to blithely walk into an office and sit down without being invited is quite impolite, even though Koreans are very patient with Americans because they have been so exposed to them since the Korean War.

This same seating ritual coupled with the necessary verbal insistences and denials occurs in almost every instance of sitting down in Korea. For example, in the black, chauffer-driven cars (people with social status have drivers) the right rear seat is the seat of honor and the same insistance followed by denials noted above often takes place in this social situation. The same applies to the seating arrangement in a Korean home. Finally it is noteworthy that sitting down

is very important to Koreans. To leave one standing for even two or three seconds after the initial verbal greeting is considered extremely impolite. Moreover, to refuse to sit down beyond the polite two or three denials is equally impolite.

In addition to where one sits, how one sits is equally important in Korea. To cross the legs is a social taboo--it communicates disrespect. This custom seems to be waning however, particularly in instances where an American is part of the interaction; nevertheless, to sit cross-legged is still considered crude.

Another custom which communicates meaning is smoking or not smoking during a conversation. Unless invited otherwise, only the ranking male status is permitted by custom to smoke; to smoke in the presence of one's superiors without invitation is to show disrespect. In certain instances the same holds true for drinking anything from a cup or glass. By the way, only men smoke in Korea. An ocasional old woman who has outlived her parents and inlaws, and passed her HWAN GAP will smoke openly to demonstrate her status and independence. Smoking is definitely a status-related activity. For example, male students will hide their cigarettes in the cupped palms of their hands and put their hands behind their backs if their instructor should walk by -- not to hide the fact that they smoke, but to show respect.

Finally, eye contact during an interpersonal dialogue is also a reaffirmation of position. Any prolonged eye contact other than a fleeting glance is not polite. However, the ranking participant in a discussion is permitted to maintain eye contact for longer periods of time than the other discussant. One can always identify the ranking status in an interpersonal dialogue by observing which one maintains eye contact the longest while the other person is glancing down or to the side.

The Importance of Interpersonal Relationships. The Korean people regard human relationships and human contact as very important. Their English equivalent for the American term "interpersonal relationships" is the word "humanship". Relationships follow roughly four main themes.

First, in an American sense, personal space is nonexistent and interpersonal touch is everpresent in Korea. Men friends often hold hands with other men similar to an American male/female couple. And girls and women friends usually walk arm in arm whenever they walk together. These nonverbal touching patterns are ways of demonstrating sincere human affection for each other. Moreover, to the space - conscious American, Koreans crowd one to the extreme. Due to an extremely dense population in a very small country (35 million people in roughly the size of Indiana) "elbow room" is a luxury that one does not have. Thus buses, stores, and almost all public places are packed literally from shoulder to shoulder. Consequently, being pushed, touched, shoved, and stepped on is an everyday occurrence. And "excuse me" in any sense in unknown to Koreans. Because of the frequency of contact one would be saying "excuse me" all the time.

Interestingly, traditional Korean young couples or even husbands and wives do not demonstrate affection in public or in the presence of any members of their family. Moreover, Korean parents do not hug, caress, or kiss their children after they enter elementary school. Thus the very real need for human touching and nonverbal contact seems to be satisfied with friends and acquaintances of the same sex.

The second dimension of Korean "humanship" is their intense interest in and extreme concern for the other person's well being. This topic was mentioned earlier. The Korean people are unquestionably the most curious people this writer has ever encountered. Privacy in a Western sense does not exist in Korea. For example, incredibly, Koreans may open and read one's mail if given the opportunity. In one of several incidents a Korean graduate student took a personal letter out of the author's pocket, opened it, and read it out loud to practice his English pronunciation! To the extremely private European or American, this intrusion into personal affairs is bothersome and unsettling. Yet Koreans seem to be quite innocent in their interest in other people's private affairs; knowing one's private business

seems to be the Korean's way of getting "close to you." That is, their interest in maintaining meaningful interpersonal relations seems to be made manifest by openly and assertively collecting information about each other. In a McLuhanist "tribal village" model, this information then seems to be confidentially passed from confidant to confidant in an intertwined link of gossip and rumor. In talking with other Americans and Europeans who have lived in Korea for some time it is obvious that Koreans take great satisfaction in knowing the most intimate details about each other's personal affairs.

Next, the Korean people are extremely polite and proper with each other. For example, there are four common honorific levels in the Korean language--one level for children and servants, another for peers, another for parents and the elderly, and one for important leaders and royalty. Naturally using the wrong language in a given circumstance is a grave social faux pas. Another example of the importance of linguistic appropriateness is the Korean habit of never saying "no." To say "no" is to upset another's "kibun"--peace of mind or mood. Thus Koreans almost universally answer "yes" when asked questions, regardless of the truth of the matter. For example, when invited to dinner a Korean might respond by saying, "Yes, of course I'd be happy to come." The person responding indeed would be "happy to come," but s/he may have no intention of showing up. The point is that it is more important for the respondent to agree with the questioner's presupposition regarding the desired action (coming to dinner) than it is to actually deal with the consequences of not showing up. Thus a potential host must always check and double-check to see if the guest is really going to come.

Very often participants in a dialogue rely upon nonverbal feedback and on subtle verbal innuendos which a foreigner would miss for each other's true feelings. The Korean word for this concept is "nunchi" or eye measure. Thus in the previously cited example, the person who extended the dinner invitation

is expected to take the "eye measure" of the person who answered his invitation affirmatively. In other words, to read the mind of the invited guest and not expect him/her to show up for dinner.

Another dimension of "nunchi" is the way inferiors in social status read their superiors. For example in an occupational setting, if the boss comes to work grumpy, the whole office takes an "eye measure" of the boss's mood and everyone in the office has a bad day. The opposite is also true; if the boss has a good day, everyone has a good day. In every sense of the word "as the chief executive goes, so goes everyone in the company."

After taking a superior's "nunchi" employees deal with the situation by a skillful rhetoric of ingratiation. That is, the employees support whatever mood the boss is in by empathizing with his mood while at the same time humoring, supporting, and defending him--a kind of survival by being a social chameleon.

This reaction makes sense when understood in the context of two prevailing facts concerning Korean traditions. First, the core of Korean ontology is grounded in the teachings of Confucius. Thus, hiding and masking one's emotions is what it means to be mature in this Chinese tradition. Confucius taught the necessity of sublimating one's emotions as a philosophy of survival. In other words, a Korean would not upset a Chinese noble or war lord at the risk of his life or even the lives of his whole family. Moreover, Korea's history of virtually constant occupation reinforced this necessity of not upsetting the ruling order; thus a thoroughly ingrained personal and social rhetoric of ingratiation or appeasement was developed and is sustained today.

The other Korean tradition worth noting is the way society is completely vertically integrated, there is a pecking order in every organization, institution, and family. For example, Koreans who speak English often refuse to speak English with each other--because there is an automatic rank ordering which occurs concerning who speaks English the best as a result of the switch to a second language

and it would be a social infraction for the second in postiion to outclass the first by outspeaking him.

Organizationally speaking, the chief executive is the final authority in every sense of the word. Not only does the president or chief executive act as court of last appeal; but also he makes or passes judgment on every consequential decision in the organization. Korean institutions are run by an exaggerated theory X management system (12, 33-57); theory Y or any type of participative management is antithetical to Korean culture and traditions. Moreover, subordinates wouldn't know how to respond to Y-type treatment and would likely rebel.

The last notable dimension of Korean "humanship" is their incredible generosity with each other and particularly with foreigners. Koreans will virtually do anything to demonstrate friendship and kindness. In America this kind of open, honest, interpersonal assistance usually only occurs during times of crisis--a blackout, a tornado, a flood, Yet in Korea this willingness to help each other is an everyday occurrence. For example, if one plans to move, he simply chooses from among the many offers of help to move. Paid "babysitters" do not exist in Korea. A simple, "Will you watch my children?" will suffice. Moreover, to offer to pay another for his/her kindness is an insult; helping others is a demonstration of friendship and affection.

The Importance of a Korean's Self and Public Image. Koreans are very image conscious; so much so that often the appearance of things is more important than their substance. In Korea there are certain signs of consubstantiality which identify one as a person of position, power, and influence. Examples are: the black chauffer driven cars mentioned earlier, the dark-vested pin striped suits worn by almost all professional men; the gilt edged business cards which are printed in English and Chinese and exchanged at each introduction (understanding Chinese letters is a sign of education and status); Parker pens, Pierre Cardin or Gucci belt buckles; and Rolex watches are worn at great sacrifice. For ex-

ample, Swiss watches--all items imported from Europe or America for that matter--are very heavily taxed. The least expensive Rolex on the market lists for over $800. For most Korean business men or professional people this is a month's salary. Yet the price is paid and sacrifices are made in other areas of life because locally made (Orient) or Japanese (Seiko) wrist watches have no status.

Very often a Korean business man will have a small "hole in the wall" office which is buried on some back street that is actually less than 50 square feet of space, but his business card will say,"Mr. Oh, Inc.; Manufacturer and Retailer of the Finest Dry Goods." In fact, the business is a hand-to-mouth family operation in which the wife pulls out an old, black, pedal Singer sewing machine and custom-makes every order after it is taken, while babysitting three children playing in the 6x8 "office." But what is important is that the head of the family, the husband and father, has an image of position and status (face). This is also important for the wife since she receives her status through her husband.

Implications for Korean/American Intercultural Communication

Preserving Face at all Costs. In an interpersonal interaction, for one person to cause another person to lose face is the ultimate social disgrace. Expecting a Korean to meet a deadline may cause a loss of face. Thus Koreans should never be expected to deliver on what they promise to do. For example, clerks and tradesmen often knowlingly "promise" delivery of a product far in advance of when it will be completed. The reason is complicated and related to the Korean not being able to say "no", especially to a foreigner. To say, "we can have it tomorrow" makes the office or shop appear to be efficient and on the ball; moreover, the customer would probably like to have the product the next day. Yet both parties know that it will take three or four days to complete the product. To actually show up and ask for the product the next day is both impolite and insensitive because it makes the person who made the initial promise lose face.

Dealing with differences in source credibility and trust. The topics of source credibility and trust are singular in their troublsome implications for Americans doing business with Koreans. In America whether one can produce is the basis for interpersonal and organizational trust and source credibility. In other words, the bottom line is whether a person does what he says he will do. In Korea, the bottom line is what kind of an image does one present and sustain.

Thus honesty in an American sense does not apply to most Korean interpersonal situations because honesty is based on truth and truth varies depending on one's cultural background. For the American the truth of an interpersonal relationship is: "Did the other person do what he said he would do?" For the Korean the truth of an interpersonal relationship is: "Did each party preserve each other's honor and prestige during their relationship?" To the Korean the typical American habit of "telling it like it is" is both unsettling and insensitive. On the other hand, the Korean habit of masking or clouding an issue to save face shakes and American's trust in a relationship.

For Americans, not only is trust based upon performance; but also, it is based on information. That is, the typical American might ask himself these questions before he openly trusts another person: (1) Does the other person hide or conceal the facts of a situation in order to change the appearance of the situation? (2) Is the other person revealing the whole truth regarding the situation? These questions regarding American human relationships are related to the American ethical value of being open and honest. The typical American equates a lack of openness with dishonesty. (1, 45-54) Dishonesty is characterized by purposeful ambiguity--concealed information and sources, inaccurate information, and even purposefully misleading information. Regrettably, this

fundamental American value regarding the importance of openness in human relationships may be a significant impediment to meaningful cultural relations between some Koreans and Americans.

Korean and American methods of interpersonal bargaining are illustrative of the difference between American and Korean values of openness and honesty. Koreans are especially skillful bargainers. Almost every Korean from the shopkeeper to the top level manager seems to have an inherent ability to bargain interpersonally. Americans on the other hand, are not partiuclarly skillful bargainers; we are noted for being "fight avoiders." (2,17-56). The typical Korean begins his bargaining process by seeking and usually receiving a positive commitment from his opponent regarding the opponent's willingness to accept the principles concerning the issue at hand. Of course, the practical bargainer knows that bargaining over principles is absurd because principles are defined operationally by the contract language which details the specifics of the "principles" at issue. It is exactly at this point that the Koreans are so skillful. Often the Korean consciously and skillfully withholds the details of the issue until an initial commitment is obtained from the opponent. Then in the case of dealing with an American, the Korean knows that for most Americans, his initial agreement will hold him to the "deal" because consistency or "seeing it through to the end" is also an American value. Then the details of the agreement are usually carefully revealed at just the right time so as not to upset or anger the American enough to revoke his initial commitment. Often the details completely alter the substance of the initial agreement. Often for the sake of "cultural understanding" the American usually goes along with the newly defined conditions of the initial "agreement."

Of course, the wise American should demand full disclosure of any and all details regarding any issue at hand before he agrees to even the "principle"

of agreement. If the Korean interprets this request for information as a breach of trust, then so be it. A bargainer who consistently decreases, escalates, or even changes the ground rules of a negotiation is not a bargainer; from the American point of view, he is a manipulator. Of course, this notion is decidely Western in its focus; yet, the American who thinks that he is contributing to international understanding by continually being "had" is harming rather than helping understanding between and among peoples of different cultures.

Unfortunately many Americans who have visited or lived in Korea have dealt with this difference in Korean and American source credibility in one of two ways. First, they may have accepted the Korean habit of not supplying enough information or supplying inaccurate or misleading information as a cultural "eccentricity." Thus they often mumble and grumble to each other about the problem, but never confront the Koreans with the disparity between what is said or promised and what, in fact, is delivered. This behavior has had a damaging effect upon Korean/American relations because the natural and necessary conclusion that the Koreans draw from this American response to their behavior is that on one hand Americans are either so imperceptive that they can't tell the difference between what is claimed and what exists, or on the other hand that they don't care. Thus for the sake of not making waves, many Americans have allowed Koreans to take advantage of them.

On the other hand, some Americans--particularly those American military personnel in Korea--have dealt with the source credibility problem by withdrawal. They have unjustly concluded that Koreans are inherently devious and not trustworthy; thus they have withdrawn from any meaningful interaction with the Koreans by forming enclaves of "little America," neither seeking nor even accepting interactions with the local populace. Obviously, this behavior exacerbates problems in intercultural relations.

As noted earlier trust is very important to Koreans. The typical Korean response to a problem concerning a foreigner's stay in Korea is: "Trust us to take care of it." But what most Koreans mean by trust is: trust us to be concerned about your problem, not trust us to address the existing problem and solve it. In other words, the verbal meaning of the statement has a double meaning. Much in the same way that Americans say "Why don't you drop by sometime?" Koreans say "Trust me." The American has no intention of wanting the invited person to "drop by" unannounced; this verbal invitation is simply a societal nicety; the American should take it at face value and then proceed to solve his own problem. A fundamental difference between Korean and American interpersonal trust is that for the American, interpersonal trust is either granted or earned and is always maintained over time. That is, one person must continue to honor the trust another person has in him/her by not violating it by word or deed. Once it is violated, it must be rebuilt with careful detail to re-establishing the openness and honesty regarding the expected behavior in the relationship.

For Koreans, interpersonal trust is blindly and openly given and almost never taken away. It is never taken away because it cannot be violated. That is, the receiver of the violation refuses to recognize it as a breech of trust (in an American sense). Koreans assume as a positive self-fulfilling prophecy, that whatever one may do s/he has a good reason for doing it. In other words, the receiver of the trust violation (again in an American sense) refuses to recognize it as anything other than understandable and acceptable behavior if viewed in the proper context.

If Americans are truly interested in improving interpersonal relations with Koreans, then they should diplomatically confront them with the disparity between the American and the Korean notions of trust. For only by recognizing

that Americans have a different view of trust and source credibility--fact not image--will Koreans come to learn how to adjust their messages in dealing with Americans. This contention is decidedly culturally pluralistic in its focus. Thus the Korean is not asked to change his culture habits of masking or image building when dealing with each other, but rather is asked to recognize the American's need for accurate information on a given issue.

Willingness to Accept Advice. Koreans are a proud and self-confident people. As noted earlier, Korea has been attacked over 700 times in its 5000 year history; yet the Korean culture has survived. Thus understandably Koreans tend to mistrust non-Koreans. This fact is fundamental to understanding Korea. Crane observes that many modernized Koreans are "quick to point out the weaknesses of foreigners, and generally tend to feel superior to them, thus confirming their traditional belief that ultimately the Korean way is the best way and Koreans are the cleverest people on earth." (8, 115). These two historical facts--Korea's inherent aptitude for survival coupled with its non-violent nature--combine to produce a unique sense of Korean self-confidence. A typical Korean will tackle any problem, with an almost naive optimism. He seems to have an unabiding faith that the outcome of any problem will be positive (8, 89). This philosophy creates two specific problems for Korean/American intercultural realtions. First, because of their proud self-confidence Koreans tend to be poor listeners and even totally unreceptive to advice or help, especially from the outside. They usually neither seek nor will accept suggestions regarding the conduct of affairs in Korea. Rather they choose to learn by indirect observation and then "go it on their own." For example, numerous times in the course of the faculty exchange to Korea this writer offered help and assistance to various officers and departments in various Korean institutions. The offers were invariably graciously received and then summarily dismissed. Even a Korean house-

keeper has a certain timetable and method for accomplishing certain tasks; to upset the timetable or suggest a new metnod of doing someting is to invoke a barrage of nonverbal signs demonstrating displeasure. The next day the housekeeper will promptly return to her established ways of doing things. Only a downright insistence verging on a "do it or else" command will cause a behavior change. For example, only an ornery demand caused this writer's housekeeper to cease washing the dished in cold water in favor of albeit less timely but more sanitary hot water.

But this reluctance to take advice holds true even for relations between Koreans. Even the former President of the country, Park, Chung Hee faced this problem in the leading of his country. For example, a number of years ago he instituted a reforestation program. April 5 was designated as Tree Planting Day and everyone in the country stopped work and planted trees. Even the President himself scrambled up a hillside and planted a number of seedling pines. Winter came and the Korean populace proceeded to cut the small trees for firewood. This happened for a couple of years and then Park, Chung Hee decreed that the penalty for cutting <u>any</u> tree no matter how big or small, new or old, without government permission was <u>death</u>. Now the hillsides are blossoming with small trees! The message in all this for Americans doing business with Koreans is to be patient and to avoid expecting an open reception of new ideas or ways of doing things, and if the business matter is important, the American must broach the new idea over and over and over again, tirelessly.

<u>Resistance to Systemic Change.</u> This reluctance on part of all Koreans at every station of life to neither seek nor accept advice runs even deeper; by American standards, Koreans are inordinately resistant to systemic change. They are resistant to change for two reasons. First, change is opposed because Confucianism taught that the <u>old</u> way is always the best way and should always be

used as a model to follow. Second, change means conflict and Koreans are steadfastly opposed to any form of conflict. Crane observes that the single most important concept in any Korean's interpersonal communication is Kibun. "This rich word has no true English equivalent. 'Mood' may come close, but much more is involved." (8,25) In interpersonal relationships, preserving another's Kibun often takes precedence over other considerations. "It is believed by many that it is more important to feel right than to be right, if a choice must be made. . . . To damage someone's Kibun may effectively cut off relationships and create an enemy. Thus one does everything in his power to preserve Kibun, for once the Kibun is injured future contacts may be difficult." (8,25) As one university professor told this writer, "it is better to be harmonious than to be right or sincere." This notion is difficult for Americans to understand or accept.

Koreans resist organizational change because change inherently brings an unsettling period of unfamiliarity which may induce interpersonal conflict, and conflict is antithetical with preserving one's Kibun. Moreover, by definition, it is guaranteed to upset one's colleagues or superiors. This fundamental fact of Korean interpersonal relations is a major problem for intercultural communication with Americans. As noted earlier, openness, honesty, and trust are American interpersonal communication values. Thus to the Korean, the typical American habit of candidly "telling it like it is" is an open affront. By coming to truly understand Koreans, Americans are faced with a serious dilemma regarding possible attempts to help Koreans develop their country. On one hand, telling Koreans the truth may risk damaging the relationship and retarding progress, or on the other hand telling them what they want to hear in order to preserve their Kibun may retard progress.

There has been an incredible amount of economic growth and development in Korea in the last five years; yet most of that growth has not caused any systemic change in organizational behavior. The heirarchical system of reverence and loyalty to the man at the top remains virtually intact. Crane observes: "Loyalty is to the individual. There is little loyalty to an institution, to a firm, a government, or to abstract democracy, equality, or honesty." (8, 98) For example, American business methods involving cost accounting, long-range planning, and contractual agreements seem to be distrusted by many Koreans. Regarding the latter point, Crane observes: "To Korean businessmen, Westerners appear to make contracts on the assumption that all factors will remain indefinitely the same. . . In Korea, a written contract sometimes is of little value. It may be only a paper contract. There may be no understanding that it will be kept if the conditions at the time it was made should change." (8, 99). In other words, to ask a Korean to sign a contractual agreement or to provide a cost accounting is a mistake on two separate accounts. First, the Korean takes the request as a demonstration of a lack of trust, because to a Korean, to ask for details or specificity is inherently a lack of trust. If the American truly trusted the Korean he would not ask for specifics, but rather trust that the outcome would be acceptable. Second, to ask a Korean to sign a contract is to invite false security because as noted earlier Koreans often do not honor "paper" contracts.

Conclusion

Finally, despite their apparent reluctance for systemic change, Koreans are eager to develop their country. They are partly spurred on by historical mistrust of Japan and the Soviet Union. In the case of Japan, 35 years of Japanese occupation from 1910-1945 is the basis for the mistrust. Korea at the

same time is jealous and disparaging of Japanese economic success. They are envious of their economic achievements and power while at the same time they are extremely critical of the social changes that have resulted from Japan's economic blitzkrieg.

Another factor which fosters change in Korea is a very real fear of North Korea and Russian communism. Interestingly, most Koreans do not seem to fear China as much as Russia. Koreans think that they understand the Chinese because they are tied so closely to them by their past. As noted earlier, Korea and China are tied together by centuries of Confucianism and Buddhism. Yet Korea's brief occupation by the Russians at the end of WWII seems to have indelibly etched on most Koreans old enough to remember a mistrust and fear of Russian military brutality and insensitivity.

These two forces--the mistrust of the Japanese and the fear of the Russians--would seem to be the raison d'etre for much of the current Korean economic growth. Yet Korea has turned primarily to the United States for technical assistance and help in its economic revival. Koreans trust America because of America's commitment to Korea during the Korean War. Korea's loyalty to American is as systemic as a son's loyalty to his father. Even in the face of American recognition of the People's Republic of China and President Carter's human rights initiatives coupled with his planned withdrawal of U.S. ground forces in Korea, Korea trust America as its best friend. It is this blind, innocent trust which compels those Americans who know Korea to offer whatever help they can to this struggling nation--and to Americans who want to work with Koreans in a personal encounter. Hopefully, this study too honors that trust.

NOTES

[1]The author wishes to acknowledge the support of the presidents of the two sponsoring institutions, President James K. Sours of Southern Oregon State College and President Chang, Chong Sik of Dankook University.

[2]For a distinction among the various kinds of international and intercultural communication see Jerrold J. Merchant, "A Model of International and Intercultural Communication," International Interactions: A Transnational Multidisciplinary Journal, 1977, 4, 39-52.

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